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Letter dated 11 July 2018 from the Permanent Representatives of Peru, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Sweden and Peru, as Co-Chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, and in close cooperation with the United Kingdom, hereby share a summary of the meeting held on 5 June 2018 on women and peace and security in Mali and the Sahel (see annex).

We would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

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Permanent Representative of Peru to the United Nations

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Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations

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Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations

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Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security

Summary of the meeting on Mali and the Sahel, 5 June 2018

On 5 June 2018, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security held a meeting on the situation in Mali and the Sahel region. The members received a briefing from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Mahamat Saleh Annadif, experts from the mission and representatives of the United Nations country team. The meeting was held as the mandate of MINUSMA was to be debated by the Security Council later in the month.

Below are the main points on Mali raised in the briefing and in response to questions from Member States, which focused on the low representation of women in the mechanisms tasked with implementing the peace agreement:

- In spite of the 2015 law setting a 30 per cent minimum of representation for women in elected and nominated positions in government, women continue to be alarmingly underrepresented in decision-making bodies, as illustrated by the total number of women currently serving in several key commissions. The committee that is monitoring implementation of the peace agreement has 14 men representing the armed movements and no women, while the numbers on the Government side vary. The armed movements are represented by 52 members in four different subcommissions and only one of the listed members is a woman, who has not attended the meetings. The National Council for Security Sector Reform is made up of 66 men and 4 women. The National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration has 32 men and 1 woman, although the President has tried to rectify this imbalance by appointing gender advisers. The Integration Commission has 42 members, all of whom are men. The interim authorities in the north are led by 68 men and only 1 woman. Finally, the National Commission for Truth, Justice and Reconciliation has 5 women out of 25 members. Apart from having relatively better numbers, this Commission has also implemented a gender policy throughout its work

- Women hold 25 per cent of ministerial positions in the Government and just under 10 per cent of parliamentary seats. There are no female governors, less than 2 per cent of mayors are women and one quarter of all local councillors are women. In spite of the efforts of the United Nations, including those supported by the Peacebuilding Fund since 2015, there are concerns about the participation of women in the upcoming election, as the percentage of female voters that are registered is lower than for the last election

- Following the support of the United Nations provided to 50 women leaders from across Mali to attend the conférence d'entente nationale in 2017, a group of these leaders met with representatives of the United Nations, members of the team conducting the strategic review of MINUSMA and the Secretary-General during his visit in May to share their views on the need to improve the representation of women in these mechanisms

- The Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Children and the Family has set up an institutional mechanism to monitor, coordinate and manage the

implementation of the national action plan on women, peace and security for the period 2015–2018

- The adoption in 2017 of a law on human rights defenders, including women's rights defenders, is a welcome and important step, and the United Nations is now focused on supporting the Government in implementing this new law

- Reports of sexual and gender-based violence have increased in recent years, and a majority of those incidents involve intimate partner violence. During the first quarter of 2018, the Gender-based Violence Information Management System recorded 464 cases of gender-based violence, half of which consisted of sexual violence and 9 per cent of which were incidences of child marriage. In 97 per cent of cases, the victim was female, and in 66 per cent of cases the victim was under 18 years of age. It is estimated that 80 per cent of survivors do not have easy access to services

- Although the legislation of Mali contains provisions addressing sexual violence, the country still does not have a dedicated law on gender-based violence. A draft bill on gender-based violence is expected to be considered by the parliament before the end of 2018, and the United Nations is trying to ensure that issues specific to conflict-related sexual violence are addressed. In addition, representatives of MINUSMA meet regularly with the Minister of Justice and the Army Chief of Staff to advocate for the acceleration of legal action against perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence, including through military justice for cases attributed to the Malian security forces

- The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict noted that a number of non-State actors in Mali had been listed repeatedly in the annex to the report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence as credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape or other forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. While some actors have signed unilateral communiqués on sexual violence in conflict, the Government of Mali has not yet signed a joint communiqué with the Office, which has been pending since April 2016. The Office further noted that there were over 100 registered cases of sexual violence pending from 2015, and that half of all victims that had applied for protection had not been accommodated. The United Nations continues to train rule of law actors on how to address cases of sexual violence, but capacity remains low

- A leading member of Ansar Eddine, Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud, was transferred to the International Criminal Court after being detained by Malian authorities last year. He is accused of the crime of persecution on the grounds of gender, including leading a religious police and enforcing a policy of forced marriage that led hundreds of women into sexual slavery during the occupation of Timbuktu by Islamist groups in 2012 and 2013

- Women make up 22 per cent of the staff of MINUSMA, with the majority of women in non-senior roles and in United Nations Volunteer positions. Women continue to be underrepresented in the military (2 per cent) and police (7 per cent) components, as well as in senior professional categories (17 per cent) and national staff (19 per cent). The United Nations is working with troop- and police-contributing countries to increase the deployment of female military and police officers. With regard to gender expertise, MINUSMA currently has five positions in the Women's Protection Unit. Recruitment for the post of Senior Gender Adviser and the other positions in the Gender Advisory Unit is still ongoing.

With regard to the Sahel region, and specifically to Mali, Chad, the Niger, Mauritania and Burkina Faso, United Nations actors in Mali and at Headquarters

highlighted a growing trend of terrorist and violent extremist groups exploiting gender dynamics and norms to advance their objectives. Women and girls are both the target of violent extremism and recruits of terrorist and violent extremist groups. It was noted that the attack against MINUSMA of 14 April 2018 included a suicide vehicle that was driven by a woman. There has been an increase in the number of women in the security sector and in national bodies dealing with countering violent extremism and terrorism, but these efforts must be sustained and broadened as part of a comprehensive, gender-sensitive approach involving all actors, as counter-terrorism measures also affect women and girls directly or indirectly, including through military operations or restrictions on freedom of movement and economic activity. A gender adviser has just joined the secretariat of the G-5 Sahel in Nouakchott and will soon advise on the best modality for providing gender expertise to the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel, as called for by the Security Council in previous meetings. The United Nations support plan for the Sahel for the period 2018–2022 that accompanies the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel places gender equality and women's empowerment among its six priority areas, and is aimed at promoting women, including young women, as champions of peace movements in the Sahel. In July 2018, the Deputy Secretary-General will undertake a joint high-level mission to the Niger, Chad and South Sudan. She will be accompanied by the leadership of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the United Nations Population Fund, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Africa and the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security. The mission will focus on women and peace and security. The Security Council will be briefed following the visit.

UN-Women, as the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group, read out some of the recommendations highlighted in the brief shared with the participants. These included:

- In negotiations on the mandate of MINUSMA, the Security Council should retain all the provisions on women and peace and security that have been secured in recent years, but should strengthen the language on the meaningful participation of women in the mechanisms implementing the peace agreement and in the elections, reflecting the consistently low levels of women's representation in peace and security decision-making in Mali
- Both the persistent low participation of women and the need to sign a joint communiqué with the United Nations on conflict-related sexual violence should be raised directly with Malian counterparts in the Mission and in Bamako, as called for by the Informal Expert Group in previous meetings
- The secretariat of the Informal Expert Group will share a list of key questions on gender issues in the Sahel crisis to be shared with the United Nations principals visiting Chad and the Niger in July, with a focus on women and peace and security
- It is urgent to have more clarity and to take action on how to influence or advise these multinational, non-United Nations military coalitions in both the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel on gender issues. The co-chairs of the Informal Expert Group should enquire with the Group of Support for the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel, as well as the African Union and the relevant actors in the United Nations, about the deployment of gender expertise, and Security Council members should use every Council briefing to hold the briefers accountable to the gender-related provisions of resolution 2391 (2017).

The Co-Chairs closed the meeting, thanking MINUSMA and the United Nations country team for their participation from Bamako, and committed to following up on the recommendations.